ECLIPSE INTERNATIONAL

Masamune Shirow's seminal first work

BLACK Magic

STUDIO PROTEUS

Book Four of Four

Black Magic Chapter Three:

CITY LIGHT

BLACK MAGIC

by Masamune Shirow

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In this English edition of Black Magic, the artwork has been reversed
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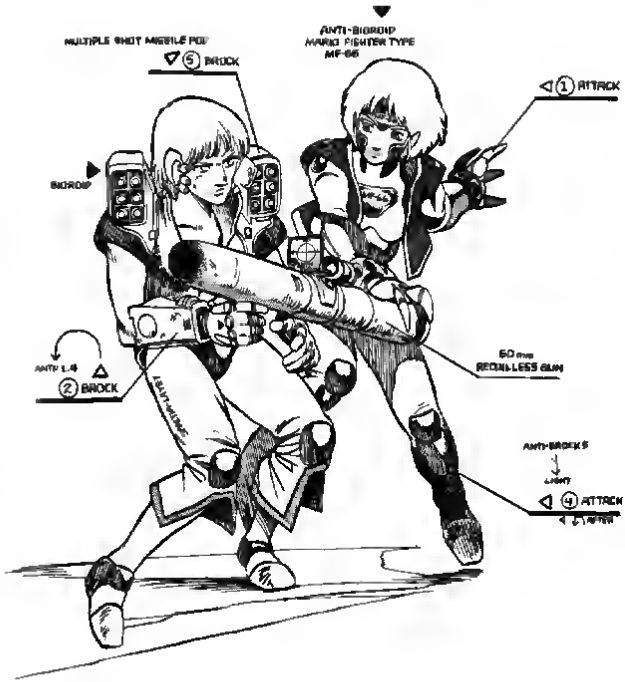

ANTI-BIOROID
MARIO FIGHTER TYPE
MF-05
MULTIPLE SHOT MISSILE POD
5 BROCK
1 ATTACK
BIOROID
50 mm
RECOILLESS GUN
ANTI L-9
2 BROCK
ANTI-BROCK 5
4 ATTACK

AT THIS TIME, THE VENUSIAN CIVILIZATION ENCOMPASSED FIVE PLANETS, SEVERAL COLONIES, AND COUNTLESS SPACELABS.

AT THE OUTER EDGE OF THIS CIVILIZATION--THE SATURNIAN MOON NAMED TITAN--A FLEET OF EMIGRANT SHIPS PREPARED TO DEPART IN ACCORDANCE WITH A PROJECT LAUNCHED BY ZEUS.

THIS SCHEDULE DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, EITHER. IT'S TOO RUSHED, WITH ALL THOSE DEPARTURES IN QUICK SUCCESSION.
YEAH, TYPHON SAYS THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT IT MAYBE SO, HUH?

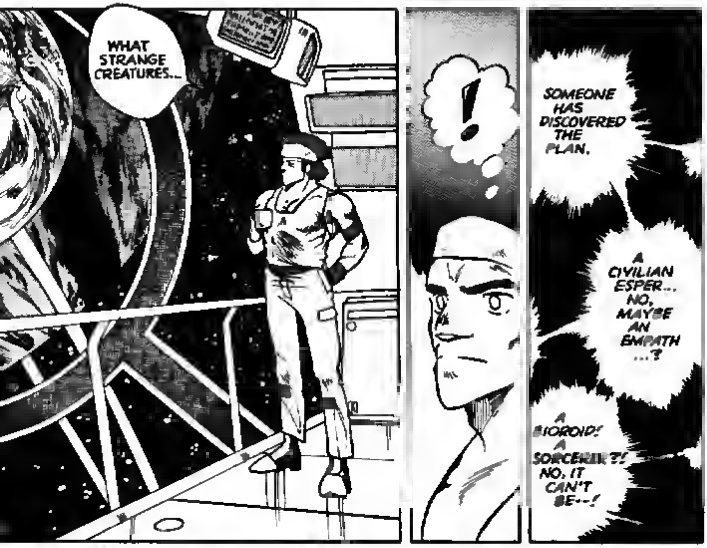
THE WHOLE THING IS BEING DONE IN A REAL HALF-ASSED WAY
SAY... YOU COULD PROBABLY CARE LESS ABOUT THIS, BUT...
...IT SEEMS LIKE TYPHON PREFERS YASHA'S COMPANY TO MINE
Heh Heh. COME ON, DON'T GRIPE JUST BECAUSE YOU GOT LEFT BEHIND.
THAT REMINDS ME.. THEY SHOULD BE LIFTING OFF ANYTIME NOW, RIGHT?
YOU WANT TO WATCH IT ON THE 3V?
NAH, NOT REALLY.
POLITICS IS TOO DAMNED COMPLI-CATED.
AND I HATE COMPLICATED THINGS. I SURELY DO.

"THE S.S. PROCRUSTES HERE..."
...WILL BE ACCELERATING PRIMARILY WITH THE INTERSTELLAR RAMJET DRIVE, BUT WE'LL USE SATURN'S GRAVITATIONAL PULL TO GIVE US OUR INITIAL VELOCITY.
WHEN WE COME OUT OF OUR SATURN FLY-BY, WE'LL ARC AROUND TITAN TO LINE US UP WITH OUR FLIGHT WINDOW OUT OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM.
KLIK
RIGHT, CAPTAIN?
YES, YES.
BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT..
...TAKE A LOOK AT THIS VIEW, HERMES.
FEELING SENTI-MENTAL AGAIN?

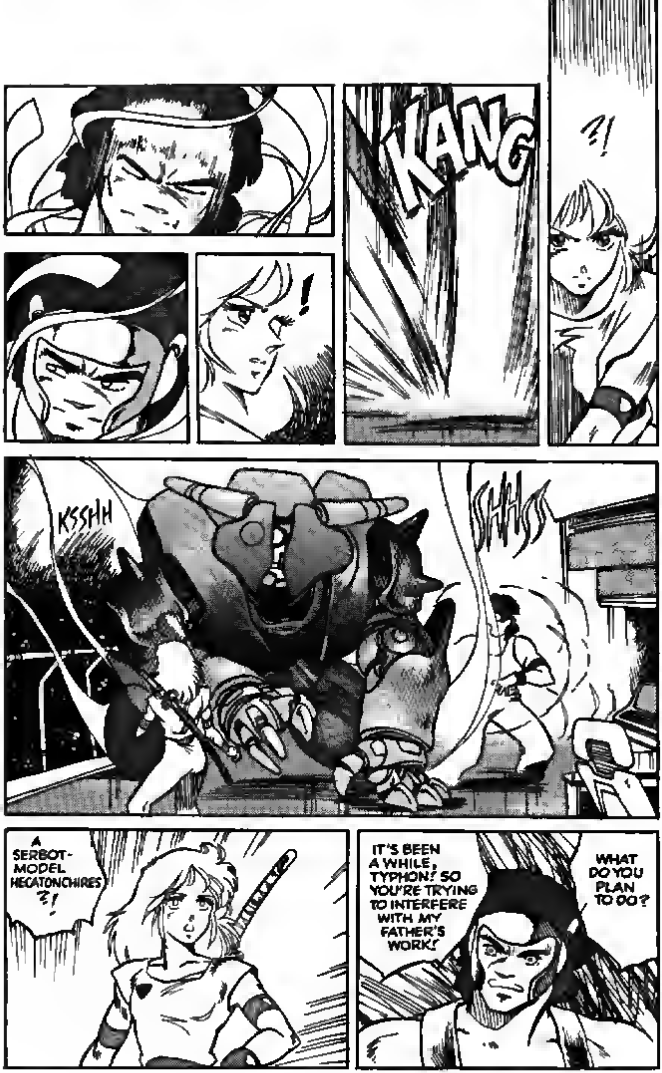
NOT EXACTLY. LOOK AT ALL THOSE CITY LIGHTS... TITAN IS ABSOLUTELY TEEMING WITH PEOPLE.
IT TURNS MY STOMACH.
YEAH, YEAH-- YOU THINK HUMANS SHOULD LIVE IN HARMONY WITH NATURE, AND ALL THAT CRAP..
RIGHT, CAPTAIN ?
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO EXPECT SYMPATHY FROM YOU. I'LL BE IN MY CABIN.
!
HI, THERE!

YOU'RE THE CAPTAIN, RIGHT?
AND WHO ARE YOU?
OH, JUST A PASSENGER.
I HAVE TO TALK TO YOU.
ABOUT WHAT?
COMMISSIONER HERMES.
YOU SEE, HE'S A SPY.
LISTEN... EITHER CHANGE COURSE TO A MORE PERIPHERAL TRAJECTORY...
...OR SKIP THE FLY-BY ALTOGETHER OTHERWISE, EVERYONE ON BOARD WILL DIE.
W-WAIT! YOU CAN'T JUST EXPECT ME TO... I MEAN, WITHOUT PROOF..
I FIGURED THAT'S WHAT YOU'D SAY, SO I ALLOWED THIRTY MINUTES FOR YOU TO DECIDE...
.....
.....!

NOW, NOW. AT YOUR AGE, YOU SHOULDN'T KID YOUR ELDERS LIKE THAT...DON'T YOU THINK? HA HA
WSSHH
Hmph!
YOU'RE PRETTY YOUNG YOURSELF... DO YOU PLAN TO DIE WITHOUT CHECKING TO SEE IF I'M RIGHT?
ONLY 29 MINUTES LEFT...
NOW YOU'RE MAKING ME MAD! I'M A BUSY MAN, GIRL!
I'VE NO TIME FOR STUPID JOKES.
THERE'S PROOF
WANNA SEE?
ALL RIGHT, THEN-- LET'S GO.
AT-46
GUARDS!
MY, YOU'RE A CAUTIOUS FELLOW.
I MAY BE YOUNG, BUT I'M THE CAPTAIN, AND I BELIEVE I KNOW HOW TO DO MY JOB...
OKAY, OKAY...!
JUST DON'T LET HERMES KNOW.
LET'S BE DISCREET ABOUT THIS, hmm?


WHAT STRANGE CREATURES...
!
SOMEONE HAS DISCOVERED THE PLAN.
A CIVILIAN ESPER... NO, MAYBE AN EMPATH ...?
A BIOROID! A SORCERER?! NO, IT CAN'T BE--!

WHAT THE--!?
?!!
YAAHH !!
Oh, YES INDEED, HERMES!
TYPHON'S FAVORITE MAGIC, REMEMBER ?


KANG
?!
!
KSSHH
SHHH
A SERBOT-MODEL HECATONCHIRES
?!
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, TYPHON! SO YOU'RE TRYING TO INTERFERE WITH MY FATHER'S WORK!
WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO?

A BRAT LIKE YOU HAS NO BUSINESS ASKING SUCH QUESTIONS.
WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH THAT BLACK MONSTER?
KSSHHH
YOU ONLY HAVE ONE LIFE TO LOSE.
BETTER QUIT WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD!
THIS SERBOT'S A SPECIAL MODEL... STRONG ENOUGH TO FIGHT A SORCERER!
EVEN ONE LIKE YOU, TYPHON!!

KOOM
ZZKK
!
KANG
WHST

WHOOM
WHA--
HAH!

DAMN IT! SHE MUST'VE MADE A REFLEX JUMP JUST BEFORE SHE BLACKED OUT.
THERE GOES MY BIG CHANCE!
WHERE IS SHE?!
OWWW.. THAT HURTS
HM?!
JUST A LOUSY ELECTRIC SHOCK.. BUT I CAN FEEL IT RIGHT IN MY SPINE
OWWW.. IT STILL STINGS..
Uhhh..
WHAT IF IT RUINS MY SEX LIFE? THAT LITTLE BASTARD....!
NOW I'M REALLY MAD!!

WAIT A SEC--DID IT DELIVER THAT SHOCK ON ITS OWN.. ?
A SEMI-AUTONOMOUS SERBOT, eh? THAT DAMN ZEUS! ANOTHER NASTY TOY
!
VZZZZZZZT
HAH!
NOT SO FAST, MY BOY!
Uh-oh!

SON OF A B--
KANGG
:uff!:
GHOK
!
GHOK
WRAM
HNGG!

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
JEEZUZ!
KANG

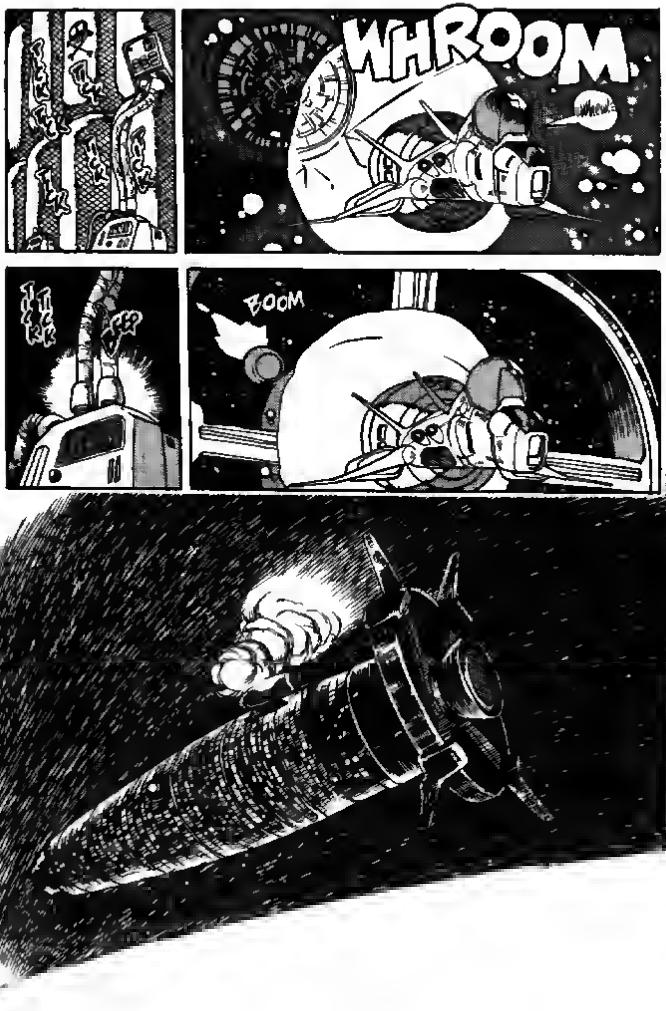
THAT LITTLE COWARD! Oh, WELL... IT'S NEARLY TIME, ANYWAY.
SHAA
BESIDES, I WOULDN'T WANT TO WASTE MY SWORD ON THE LIKES OF HIM
MMM
Hmm?!
WHAT'S THIS? STILL TRYING TO MOVE?
THAT'S KIND OF CUTE, ACTUALLY.
Hm?
ZZZVVKK!
!
SSSHHSS
BEEP!
W... WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW...
YOU REALLY ARE SEMI-AUTONOMOUS..

CENTRAL CONTROL ROOM
THESE SENSITIVITY MEASUREMENTS COST MONEY, SO BE AS QUICK AS YOU CAN!
OKAY, OKAY.
FIND ANYTHING?
NOT YET!
THAT KID CLAIMS THERE'S SOME TRICK DEVICE IN THE HARDWARE. JEEZ...
FIGURES OUR FIRST JOB'D BE A BUG HUNT!
WAIT!
WHAT IS IT?
FIND SOME FREEZE-DRIED COCK-ROACHES?
TAKE A LOOK AT THIS BOARD!
SEEMS LIKE IT'S RIGGED UP TO COLLECT DATA FROM ALL ON-BOARD INSTRUMENTATION-- BUT IT'S NOT MICROCIRCUITRY!
IT'S SOME KIND OF METAL PLATE SEALED IN RESIN...
!

WELL, CAPTAIN? BELIEVE ME NOW?
WAIT UNTIL IT'S ANALYZED.
FINE, FINE! YOU'VE GOT TWELVE WHOLE MINUTES.
ANALYZE IT, AND REPORT TO ME IN TEN.
UNDER-STAND?
WELL, THEN...
YES?
WHO ARE YOU, AND HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS?
LET'S JUST SAY THIS SHIP IS CARRYING MORE PASSENGERS THAN OFFICIALLY REPORTED AND FEWER SUPPLIES AND FOOD SOURCES THAN REPORTED...
...WHICH A CERTAIN WOMAN WOULD LIKE TO MAKE PUBLIC, IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT ZEUS' DOWNFALL.
THAT'S ALL I CAN TELL YOU.
THERE ARE NO WOMEN REGISTERED ON OUR EMPATH LIST, AND THERE AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE ANY ESPERS ON BOARD
TERROR-ISTS...? NO, WAIT...
THE STAFF RUNNING THIS SHIP ANSWERS DIRECTLY TO ZEUS' GOVERN-MENT...
WHETHER OR NOT THE STAFF INCLUDES TERRORISTS OR SABOTEURS IS SOMETHING TO WORRY ABOUT LATER...
...AFTER YOU GET THIS SHIP SAFELY AROUND SATURN.

:HFF:
:HFF:
:HFF:
..SO I SEE THIS HIGH-SPEED MINIBOAT THAT'S NOT LISTED IN THE CATALOG. SEE ..
...AND I FIGURE IT'S GOTTA BE A RAMJET
IT'S GOT THE WINGS, THE GUAGES...
?
OUTTA MY WAY!
KRAK
HRKK!
THIRTY SECONDS TO GO ..

BEEP
BEEP
KLIK
VREEEE
C'MON, C'MON ....!
HURRY UP AND REACH DRIVE POWER ....!


WHROOM
BOOM

WHKOOOOMMM
!
BRIDGE, IT'S ME. WHAT WAS THAT?!
IT'S, er, uh...
THE BOTTOM LEVEL OF THE BRIDGE POD EXPLODED?! WHAT'S THE DAMAGE TO THE SHIP?
DO YOU KNOW?!
WOULD YOU SHUT UP OVER THERE! I CAN'T HEAR!!
WHAT?!
SORRY, CAPTAIN-- WE LOST THE MONITORS!
!
CAPTAIN! WE'RE OFF COURSE!
!

WHAT ABOUT THE SPS*?
WE CAN'T USE IT UNTIL THE RAMJET HAS FIRED!
YOU MEAN WE'LL JUST PLUNGE INTO SATURN?!
AND YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING?
THAT...
...THAT'S ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT.
*SERVICE PROPULSION SYSTEM, CONSISTING OF ORBITAL CORRECTION ROCKETS

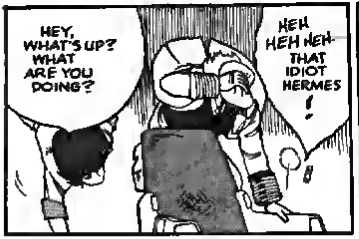
THIS MAY JUST BE COINCI-DENCE, BUT...
..WE WERE TRACKING TWO SUSPICIOUS PERSONS BY MONITOR...
...WHEN COMMIS-SIONER HERMES SHOWED UP, AND-- WELL, TAKE A LOOK.
VIDEO
.....
AND CHECK OUT THAT DOORWAY-- SEE THAT?
AN UNLISTED LIGHT BOAT.
SO NOW DO YOU BELIEVE ME?
IT'S A LITTLE LATE, OF COURSE.
H... HERMES DID THIS TO MY SHIP...?
AND, MORE TO THE POINT, ZEUS WANTS TO DO IT TO HUMANITY.
BUT WHY?!
BAM
Umm... SHOULDN'T YOU BE FIGURING OUT HOW TO SAVE US?
DAMN HIM...
WAAH! I CAN'T GO HOME!

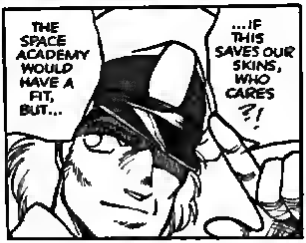
TYPHOON !!
YES?
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, YASHA! TO STOP A FALLING SHIP, I'D HAVE TO LIFT IT AGAINST THE GRAVITATIONAL FIELD OF AN ENTIRE PLANET!
IN THIS CASE, THAT'S THE GRAVITATIONAL ACCELERATION OF SATURN APPLIED TO THE HUGE MASS OF THIS SHIP! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW BIG SATURN IS?
DIAMETER 70,000 MILES. MASS, 111 TIMES THAT OF VENUS..
I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW MY HEIGHT AND WEIGHT, TOO.
AS A MATTER OF FACT..
IF YOU'RE SO SMART, DON'T ASK ME FOR STUPID FAVORS.
UP TO TEN TONS, I COULD PROBABLY HANDLE. BUT A COLONY SHIP? NO WAY!
CAPTAIN! WHAT IF YOU EXPLODED SOMETHING ON THE UNDERSIDE OF THE SHIP?
A MOMENT VECTOR, huh...? MIGHT BUY US SOME TIME, BUT WE STILL WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HIT ESCAPE VELOCITY..
IF ONLY WE COULD START UP THE RAM ENGINE...
DAMN IT ALL..

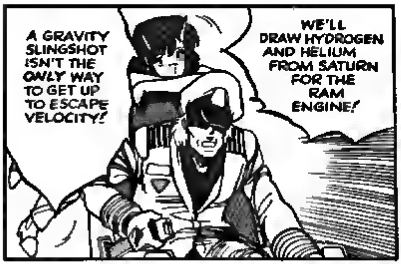
TWELVE MILLION PASSENGERS PER SHIP, FIVE SHIPS PER MISSION, FOUR LAUNCHES A YEAR... THAT'S 240 MILLION PEOPLE IN ONE YEAR...
WHAT THE HELL IS ZEUS THINKING OF? WHY--?
WHY ARE YOU WASTING TIME WORRYING ABOUT THAT NOW?!
!
WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR GRAVITY?!
THE MAIN A/G UNITS ARE FAILING, CAPTAIN!
THIS IS GONNA BE ROUGH ON THE GROUNDHOGS...
KLIK
EEK!
I BET ALL THE CIVILIANS ON BOARD ARE LOSING THEIR LUNCH BY NOW..
HOW CAN YOU ALL BE SO CALM?!
BECAUSE EVEN IF WE DON'T MAKE ESCAPE VELOCITY, WE'LL JUST MOVE INTO ELLIPTICAL ORBIT AROUND SATURN. WE'RE NOT ABOUT TO BLOW UP OR ANYTHING.

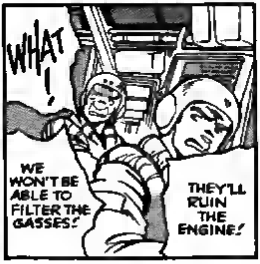
OH, YEAH... RIGHT! BUT SATURN HAS A REAL THICK ATMOSPHERE-- WON'T OUR ORBIT DECAY REALLY QUICKLY?
BRIDGE!! SWITCH IN THE INTER-STELLAR DRIVE NAVIGA-TIONAL CONTROLS!
BY GOD, WE MIGHT MAKE IT YET!!

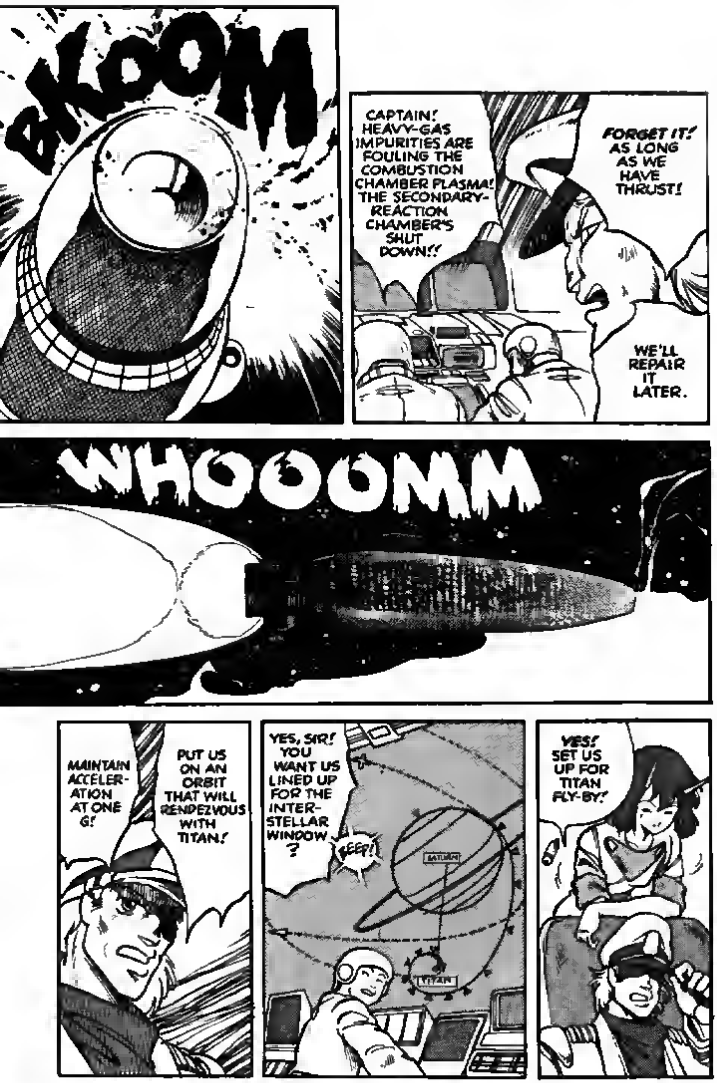
WE'RE ENTERING THE OUTER ATMOSPHERE!
POWER UP THE RAMSCOOP!
AS SOON AS THE FUSION ENGINE IGNITES, THROTTLE IT BACK TO ONE GRAVITY...
...OR WE'LL OVERSHOOT TITAN!


HEY, WHAT'S UP? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
HEH HEH HEH... THAT IDIOT HERMES!


THE SPACE ACADEMY WOULD HAVE A FIT, BUT...
...IF THIS SAVES OUR SKINS, WHO CARES?!


A GRAVITY SLINGSHOT ISN'T THE ONLY WAY TO GET UP TO ESCAPE VELOCITY!
WE'LL DRAW HYDROGEN AND HELIUM FROM SATURN FOR THE RAM ENGINE!


WHAT!
WE WON'T BE ABLE TO FILTER THE GASSES!
THEY'LL RUIN THE ENGINE!


BKOOM
CAPTAIN! HEAVY-GAS IMPURITIES ARE FOULING THE COMBUSTION CHAMBER PLASMA! THE SECONDARY-REACTION CHAMBER'S SHUT DOWN!!
FORGET IT! AS LONG AS WE HAVE THRUST!
WE'LL REPAIR IT LATER.
WHOOOMM
MAINTAIN ACCELER-ATION AT ONE G!
PUT US ON AN ORBIT THAT WILL RENDEZVOUS WITH TITAN!
YES, SIR! YOU WANT US LINED UP FOR THE INTER-STELLAR WINDOW?
BEEP!
SATURN
TITAN
YES! SET US UP FOR TITAN FLY-BY!

OKAY, THIS IS IT!
FULL THRUST!!
WHROOM
ALL POWER SYSTEMS ON! ACCELERATION ONE GRAVITY!
PASSING THROUGH 105,000 FEET PER SECOND... ESCAPE VELOCITY!
ALL RIGHT!!

SO WE ACTUALLY WEREN'T IN ANY DANGER AFTER ALL?!
NOT REALLY..
BUT ONLY BECAUSE WE WERE ABLE TO START UP THE RAM DRIVE.
IF WE HADN'T, WE'D BE STUCK IN SATURN ORBIT ABOUT NOW!
ANYWAY, WE'VE GOT TO GET THE WORD OUT THAT ZEUS IS PLANNING GENOCIDE FOR THE HUMAN RACE.
AND, LEAVING ASIDE THE QUESTION OF WHETHER YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT OR NOT...
...IT'LL ALSO ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL OF TOPPLING ZEUS.
THANK YOU, CAPTAIN.
FORGET IT.

WE'RE FLYING ON INERTIA NOW.
AT ALMOST 72,000 MILES PER HOUR... TITAN'S GROWING BIGGER BY THE MOMENT.
CITY LIGHT...
Huh?
FORGET IT...
IT WAS NOTHING...

EPILOGUE

ONIMAL
HELLO...
WOW!
TYPHON! WHAT ARE YOU ALL DRESSED UP FOR?
.....
.....
Er... SORRY! I MEAN, IT REALLY SUITS YOU...
OH, THAT'S RIGHT-- DID YOU HEAR THE NEWS, BOSS?
ABOUT ZEUS?

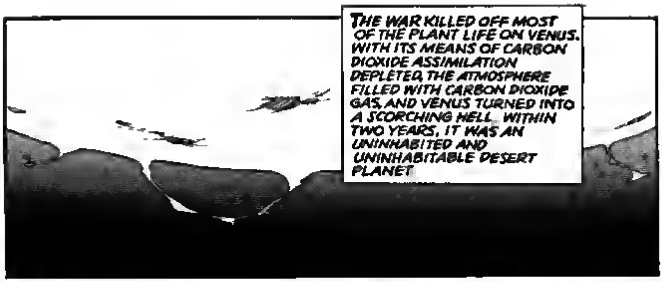
LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE FINALLY FORCING HIM TO STEP DOWN!
YEAH, THE FINAL DECISION'S SUPPOSED TO COME AT THE NEXT CABINET MEETING.
THEY SAY HUMANS MAY TAKE OVER ALL THE EXECUTOR POSITIONS--EVEN REPLACING NEMESIS.
HUMANS WILL RUN THE SHOW LIKE THEY DID BEFORE NEMESIS CAME ALONG.
WHAT A STRANGE WORLD IT'S BECOME...
BIOROIDS GET THE BOOT, eh?
MAYBE THAT'S NOT A BAD THING FOR THE GOVERNMENT, BUT I DUNNO...
SHUT UP, ALL OF YOU--YOU'RE SPOILING MY DRINK...
...Y'KNOW?
TYPHON!!
ARE--ARE YOU CRYING?!!
N-NO, I...um... I JUST...
MUS' BE THE LIQUOR...

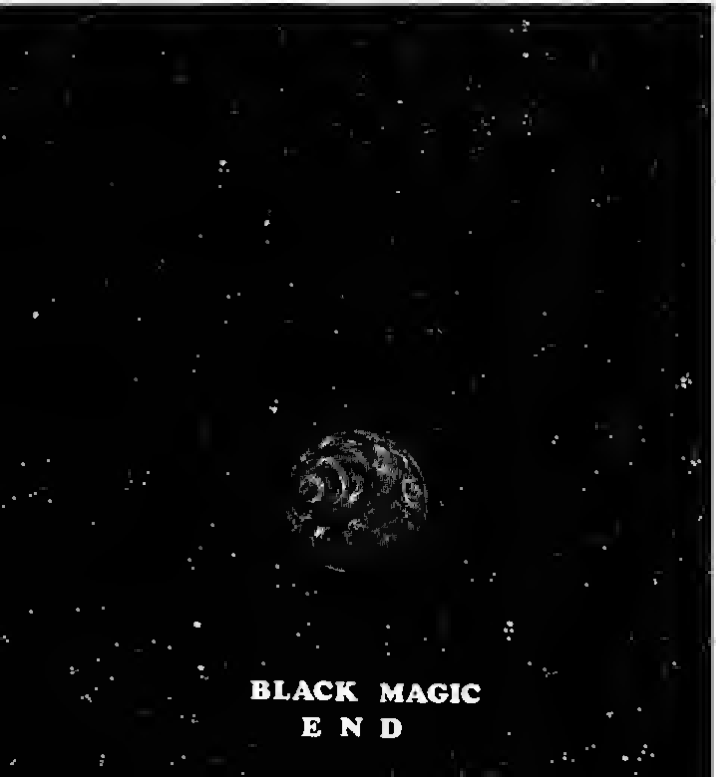
I GUESS THIS MATERIAL CIVILIZATION IS COMIN' TO AN END, huh...? OURS, ANYWAY.
. . OR MAYBE IT'S ALREADY ENDED hm?
sheri
NO MORE GUARDIANS, AN' NOTHING MORE TO GUARD... HA HA..
FUNNY, ISN'T IT...
:Sniff:
YEAH, GUESS SO.
THERE PROBABLY HASN'T BEEN A BIGGER PHASE CHANGE IN ALL OF HISTORY.
Huh?
WHAT?
.....
?!
HERE'S TO HUMANITY...
RIGHT!
TO MY DAUGHTER..

BEFORE ANYONE AWOKE THE NEXT MORNING, DUNA TYPHON LEFT VENUS BEHIND.

GOVERNMENT BY HUMANS BEGAN IN THE SECOND HALF OF THAT SAME YEAR, WITH NEMESIS AS AN ADVISOR.

BUT JUST EIGHT MONTHS LATER, THE BIOROID LIBERATION WAR BROKE OUT, AND VENUS PLUNGED ONCE AGAIN INTO A PERIOD OF GLOBAL CONFLICT.


THE WAR KILLED OFF MOST OF THE PLANT LIFE ON VENUS. WITH ITS MEANS OF CARBON DIOXIDE ASSIMILATION DEPLETED, THE ATMOSPHERE FILLED WITH CARBON DIOXIDE GAS, AND VENUS TURNED INTO A SCORCHING HELL. WITHIN TWO YEARS, IT WAS AN UNINHABITED AND UNINHABITABLE DESERT PLANET.


BLACK MAGIC
E N D

APPENDIX by Masamune Shirow

continued from Black Magic 3

NOW THEN...

The 66, considered more useful as a scout than as a combatant, can pass through booby-trapped areas, accurately and efficiently obtain information, fight if necessary, and return to base.

If capture appears imminent, the 66—cognizant of the potential loss to the enemy of important intelligence—will unhesitatingly self-destruct to maximum effect... Such booby-trapping belongs to mind the Vietnam War, which established the reputation of booby traps as cheap, vicious weapons requiring no support. Booby traps have been employed in all shapes and sizes for wars, crimes, and acts of terrorism. There is no standard model.

Throughout history, regardless of place or time, the first battle has always been a cruel, grisly experience for untested recruits. If green troops served among the Ottoman soldiers who stormed the Transylvania castle of Vlad Vaslav, or among the young warriors who entered the castle of Elizabeth I, they may as well have gone mad. M-66 attacks, on the other hand, are not delayed by fear: they do not waver in the face of the enemy.

The 66 can endure bamboo stakes and metal spikes, and in fact, by advancing through such obstacles, can clear the way for the rear guard. One advantage to the M-66's humanoid form is that it has the same bulk, and moves in the same manner, as a human. If it were designed with four or eight legs, it could not follow routes that require human footing.

But might it not explode in an accident? If it's shot, what happens to its fuel? And what about malfunctions ...? One imagines warehouses, once full of mass-produced robots, now emptied; cities crawling with the same pale feminine faces—and every one a ticking time bomb (no, no, this isn't a put-down of women!). But, of course, its power plant determines how easily an M 66 can blow up.

The model presented here is female for two reasons: to provide a lower center of gravity, and to make this *manga* more attractive. Besides, among humans, women have superior survival skills... not that this has anything to do with the 66. The female form also induces tension in enemy troops, making them slower to action (use of a rougher-looking character like the Hecatonchires would run the risk of intimidating even friendly troops). A male enemy meeting the 66 in the bush might be just a little less trigger-happy. And a real lecher could put his own life at risk. The rubber covering of the face and skin enhances this effect, while preventing bits of shrapnel or dust from penetrating the joints. Clothing serves the same purpose.

The skeleton comprises carbon fiber around a metal core. Adding strips of reinforced kevlar may improve the skeleton's resistance to attack. A standard 66 weighs between 100 and 200 kilograms, I'd guess. This could pose difficulties in swamps and quagmires, so any 66 deployed in such terrain should be equipped with rocket-propelled hook and winch—reducing its weight is not advisable as this would reduce its advantage in hand-to-hand combat. Even with new materials available to keep weight down, other factors must be considered: reactor heat, strength, center of gravity, weight distribution, the relationship of basal joint strength to peripheral weight during high speed movement, and so on... As for dynamics—that's another complex issue we won't even try to address here.

Bullet-proof armor is yet another concern linked inseparably to weight. Armor should be impervious to the 10mm bullets common to infantry. The upper limit is probably +P+.45ACP, but even that would allow rifle bullets to inflict considerable damage. Maybe the best approach would be to dispense with bullet proofing systems altogether, and instead minimize weight for improved maneuverability. That would make it easier to transport, too...

And then there's the problem of differential heating. Even with a built-in anti-condensation heater, dew may still form on lenses, filters, photoelectric parts and the like. Thus, producing all-weather models of precision machines is no easy task. No doubt, such machines are susceptible to magnetism, not to mention vibration, shock, electromagnetic pulse, torsion-induced load, etc., etc... An interesting characteristic the 66 shares with humans is that it stops moving when its intake and exhaust ports (i.e., nose and mouth) are closed.

An expressionless killer (it might even be smiling) with super-human fighting power—sounds like the stuff of horror stories! Many precedents come to mind: the artificial man in Mary Woolstonecraft Shelley's Frankeostein, or—pointing up the difference between magic and science—the more modern horror of the zombie, a walking corpse.

But a killer robot is just an extension of modern weaponry. Even if it moves on its own outside deliberate tests, it's not the work of the Devil, but simply a type of industrial accident. This is a technological (i.e., Western) sort of horror, arising precisely because living people are dragged off to their graves by a supposedly inanimate object—like a doll or a corpse—with no power or life of its own. If I had studied this type of horror story more thoroughly, I might have come up with a more interesting 66. It's something I'd like to pursue when my drawing ability has improved.

Treating the 66 as a type of weapon opens up possibilities for its use as a prop in an infinite number of scenarios; ultimately, however, the drama is a human one. In a medieval setting, the 66 could be knights pledged in fealty to a king (actually, it would more closely resemble a slave soldier, but we'll call it a knight since it's so high-priced).

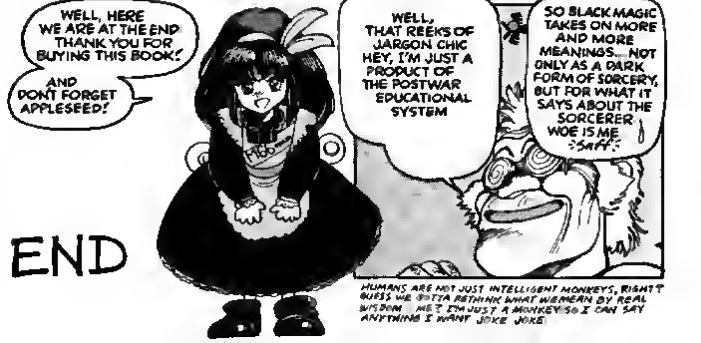
KSHAAA
KSHAAA
KSHAAA

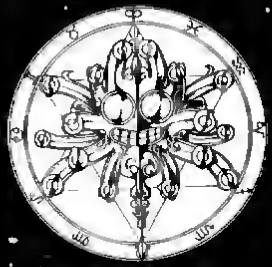
This hardly bears repeating, but the artificial intelligence represented by bioroids or androids draws from the mechanical side of humanity. Nonetheless, it effuses the smell of death, which may be why some say technology is evil incarnate. If artificial intelligence is brought as close to human intelligence as possible, then perhaps the remaining difference is the fundamental essence of humanity. Thus, numerous aspects of humanity are revealed: life and death, mind and machine, the determinate and the indeterminate, etc., etc...

Sorcery and religious ritual manipulate as their technology mechanical systems within the human mind. What is left after that? How far can humans climb toward a higher order? Death in life, life in death—is that really all there is? Are we sealed up like the Eternal Golden Braid? Sleepless nights are not brought on by horror stories alone. The 66 is a "Beautiful Captive"* or the last Gauguin: "Where did we come from? Who are we? Where are we going... ?"**

To broaden the vision of the System, to become one with the Universe... these are just dreams upon dreams, not to be comprehended by a simpleton of the TV generation like myself. I'm just a monkey, my Inner Universe is made of bones. That's why I like truly barbaric, bloody, messy, noisy unmuit. I want to evolve quickly into a real human being. But to be urged on by the likes of Nemesis, and evolve into some Substance X? That would lack class.

* Title of a painting by Rene Magritte
** Title of a painting by Paul Ganguin


WELL, HERE WE ARE AT THE END. THANK YOU FOR BUYING THIS BOOK!
AND DON'T FORGET APPLESEED!
END
WELL, THAT REEKS OF JARGON CHIC. HEY, I'M JUST A PRODUCT OF THE POSTWAR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM
SO BLACK MAGIC TAKES ON MORE AND MORE MEANINGS... NOT ONLY AS A DARK FORM OF SORCERY, BUT FOR WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT THE SORCERER. WOE IS ME. SIGH.
HUMANS ARE NOT JUST INTELLIGENT MONKEYS, RIGHT? GUESS WE GOTTA RETHINK WHAT WE MEAN BY REAL WISDOM. HEY, I'M JUST A MONKEY, SO I CAN SAY ANYTHING I WANT. JOKE. JOKE.



Black Magic reaches its conclusion with the final confrontation between renegade Executor bioroid Typhon and the agents of Zeus, Executor ruler of the Venutian Federation. Zeus' Outer Space Colonization Project proceeds at a frenzied pace—almost as though it considered the Venutian humans' only sure chance for survival. And yet an important component of the project, an interstellar emigrant ship returning from Saturn to Venus, has been sabotaged by Hermes, commissioner under Zeus' command. The agent's plan succeeds despite Typhon's intercession, and the ship survives only by dint of the captain's calm action. Typhon and crew arrive home and reveal Zeus' treachery—ensuring his downfall and a new human dominated government. As the story ends, Typhon raises a toast to a new era... but history has not reached its end, for the role of the bioroids yet needs resolution...

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